United Nations A/60/941–S/2006/529

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
17 July 2006

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixtieth session
Agenda item 14
The situation in the Middle East

Security Council
Sixty-first year

Identical letters dated 17 July 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am sending this letter to inform you that since the developments along the Blue Line on 12 July 2006, Israel started a disproportionate aggression manifested in a continuous barrage of air, sea and land, a systematic destruction of infrastructure with the single goal of inflicting as much pain as possible on the Lebanese people.

In a pretended act of self-defence:

- Israel killed over 100 civilians and wounded several hundred Lebanese civilians within four days
- Israel destroyed Beirut airport and the other airports of Lebanon
- Israel destroyed major bridges and cut any connection between Lebanese regions
- Israel hit Lebanese ports and all international roads, cutting off Lebanon from the world and preventing all rescue aid from reaching inhabitants
- Israel committed a massacre in Marwaheen, slaughtering 21 innocent women and children.

On 15 July, Prime Minister Siniora in his address to the nation declared "what we are currently facing goes beyond the issue of prisoners and abducted soldiers. We are a nation whose security and land are being trampled under a questionable pretext". The Lebanese Government announced from the first instance when the events broke, that it had no prior knowledge of what happened. Nor did it endorse the operation carried out by Hizbollah, which led to the abduction of the two Israeli soldiers. That did not stop the aggression from escalating. Under no circumstances does Israel have the right to destroy Lebanon, displace its people and demolish the country's infrastructure. This experience forces us, more than ever before, to insist on the right of the Lebanese Government and its obligation to defend Lebanon and

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protect its citizens against aggression or threat. Lebanon cannot re-emerge if its Government is the last to know and the first to be held accountable.

The Government is the sole legitimate authority that decides on peace and war, as it represents the will and aspiration of the Lebanese people who have chosen to live together. United we will face this aggression and we will stay together behind our Government and its constitutional institutions.

The Prime Minister called for:

First: An immediate and comprehensive ceasefire under the auspices of the United Nations, which will enable the United Nations, the Arab countries and other international parties, in cooperation with the Lebanese Government, to responsibly resolve all issues arising from the events of the past few days as well as their underlying causes;

Second: Achieving the extension of the authority of the Government over all its territories in cooperation with the United Nations in southern Lebanon, striving to regain all Lebanese territory, exercising its full sovereignty over it, and implementing the 1949 armistice, which was reaffirmed by the Lebanese in the Taif Agreement;

Third: Lebanon appeals to all its friends around the world to come to its assistance, exert pressure to stop the aggression and provide humanitarian aid. The Lebanese Government holds the Israeli aggressors fully responsible for the humanitarian, social and economic catastrophe that Lebanon faces. Up until today we have been working on rehabilitating the country from the effects of the devastation caused by the previous Israeli invasions of 1982, 1993 and 1996. Today the Israeli devastation is upon us once again. From here I declare Lebanon a disaster zone which will require a plan of action that includes relief, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and the rehabilitation of all that was destroyed by the aggression.

We are rooted in our land. We hold strongly to our rights and our nation. We will overcome this catastrophe.

Lebanon lives, Lebanon lives and will continue to live.

I kindly request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 14, of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Caroline **Ziade**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.